I CLAIM:

1.   A bill acceptor for a gaming machine, the bill acceptor comprising
      a receiving zone for receiving a bill;
      a sensing device at an input region of the receiving zone for sensing at
5 least one characteristic of the bill;
      a controller in communication with the sensing device for receiving an
output signal from the sensing device; and
      an annunciator controlled by the controller to be activated when a bill
acceptance rate of the controller drops below a predetermined threshold.
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2.   The bill acceptor of claim 1, in which the receiving zone incorporates a
platen on which the bill is received and a slot at an end of the platen into
which the bill is to be inserted.

15 3.   The bill acceptor of claim 2, in which the sensing device is arranged
inwardly of the slot.

4.   The bill acceptor of claim 1, in which the sensing device senses at least
one of optical, magnetic and dimensional characteristics of the bill.
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5.   The bill acceptor of claim 2, in which the receiving zone includes an
attracting means for indicating to a patron where the bill is to be inserted into
the slot.

25 6.   The bill acceptor of claim 5, in which the attracting means comprises
an array of illuminating elements arranged in the platen of the receiving zone.

7.   The bill acceptor of claim 6, in which the annunciator is arranged in
the receiving zone.
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8.   The bill acceptor of claim 7, in which the controller causes the array of
illuminating elements to be illuminated in a predetermined, first pattern and
the annunciator is implemented in the form of an illumination of the
illuminating elements in a second, different pattern.
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9.   The bill acceptor of claim 8, in which the second pattern is activated after completion of the first pattern when the bill acceptance rate has dropped below said predetermined threshold.

5   10.   The bill acceptor of claim 1, in which, when the controller is connected to a network, a network monitoring system monitors the acceptance rate of bills by the controller and activates an alarm means when the acceptance rate drops below the predetermined threshold.

10   11.   A method of operating a bill acceptor of a gaming machine, the method including the steps of:

sensing at least one characteristic of a bill inserted into the bill acceptor;

monitoring a bill acceptance rate by a controller; and

15   activating an annunciator when the bill acceptance rate drops below a predetermined threshold.

12.   The method of claim 11, which includes energising illuminating elements of the bill acceptor in a predetermine pattern and, when the bill

20   acceptance rate drops below said threshold, energising the illuminating elements in a second, different pattern, said second pattern of illumination of the illuminating elements serving as the annunciator.

13.   The method of claim 12, in which the second pattern of illumination of

25   the illuminating elements follows completion of the first pattern.

14.   The method of claim 11, which includes transmitting a signal on a network to which the gaming machine is connected to a network monitoring system to activate an alarm means when the bill acceptance rate drops below

30   said predetermined threshold.